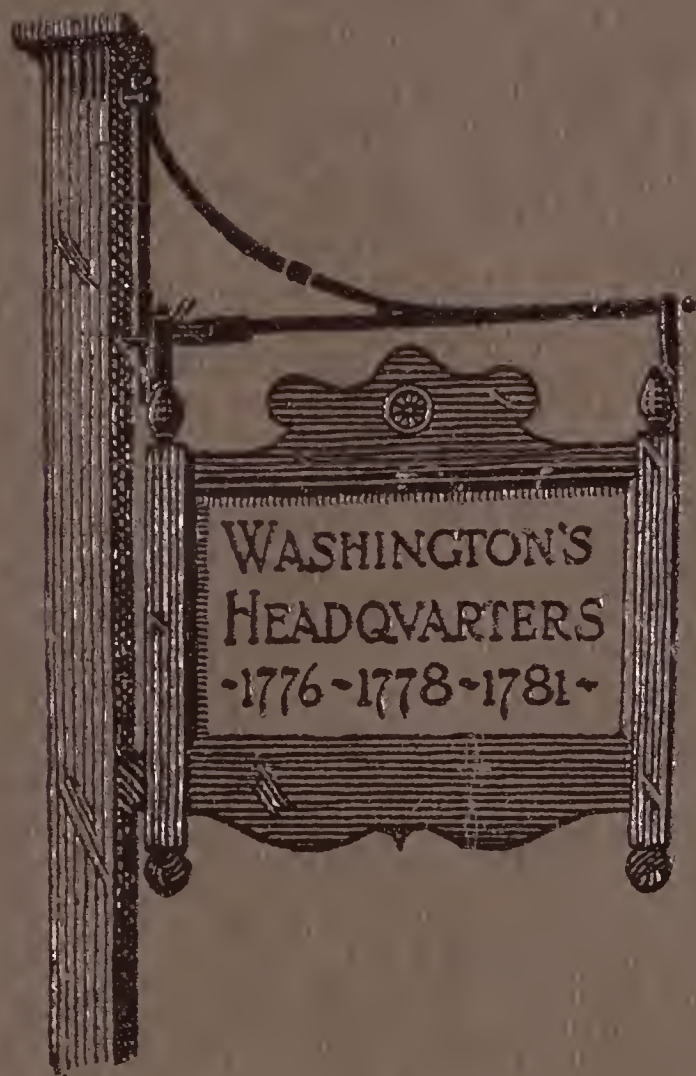


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White Plains
Westchester County, New York

✓
Historical Sketch of the
Washington Headquarters ✓

PREPARED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

The White Plains Chapter
Daughters of the American Revolution
11

✓ BY ELIZABETH G. H. COLES (MRS. SELLECK E.) ✓

CHAPTER HISTORIAN



HOUSE PURCHASED IN 1917 BY THE

County of Westchester

Restored by the White Plains Chapter, D. A. R.

MRS. JEREMIAH T. LOCKWOOD, REGENT

MRS. EDWARD M. WEST, VICE-REGENT

MRS. FRANK V. FOWLER, SECRETARY

ALEXANDER McMILLAN WELCH, CONSULTING ARCHITECT

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DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
1923

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7-16-24. June 29/24.



WASHINGTON'S HEADQUARTERS

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I.

INTRODUCTION.

WITH the on-rush of progress and time's rapid fleeting, little thought is given by the majority of people to the preservation of historic houses and relics. Every succeeding year marks the passing of some ancient landmark, now all too rare in this land where history was made and where were enacted some of the bravest deeds in our country's annals.

Some thoughtful ones there are, of course, who, turning the pages of history, pause and endeavor to visualize the scenes of by-gone days, and long to see, if only for a moment, this region so familiar to us just as it appeared in Revolutionary Times. Alas, this can be done only in imagination. When cameras were unknown and print-making an imperfect and expensive process, hand-drawn sketches or paintings were the principal means of preserving these scenes, and were very rare and by no means always accurate.

Here and there we find a house that has survived its contemporaries, and if we enter we may look forth from the very windows from which our forefathers gazed in the days long past. The surroundings are changed, but as we look out upon the landscape and again turn our eyes inward and view the rooms with their sturdy rafters and massive flooring, we seem to look into the lives and environment of those who reared the house and dwelt therein and those who followed them.

"They builded better than they knew," those sturdy men of old—for their dwellings they laid

strong and broad foundations; for the liberty and freedom of those to come after them, they laid foundations equally strong and broad.

Let us spare no effort to preserve the few remaining houses of Colonial and Revolutionary Times, while we enjoy the blessings of the Liberty for which they worked and fought and died.

How many citizens of this and neighboring communities have visited or given a thought to the ancient house so near us—the Headquarters of General Washington when at White Plains, which was occupied by him (adding together the times of his several stays here) longer than any other house in the State of New York while the war was in actual progress? True, the Hasbrouck House at Newburgh was occupied longer as an official residence, but that was after the fighting was over and the Government was only waiting until the peace treaties were signed to disband the Continental Army.

If one journeys along the old Post Road leading from New York to Danbury, Connecticut, which in White Plains is now called Broadway with stately trees shading its broad driveways and beautiful park (once the old Village Common), one is indeed traversing historic ground. Starting at the monument erected by the White Plains Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, in front of the Tenth Regiment Armory, which marks the birthplace of the State of New York, the site of the old White Plains Court House, from the steps of which the Declaration of Independence was officially read on July 9th for the first time in the State, we may follow northward the road on which General Washington traveled so often to and from his headquarters about a mile above.

Clustered about the original Court House, burned shortly after the Battle of White Plains, were the

homes and shops of the old village. About a quarter of a mile further on at our left is the Presbyterian Churchyard where several Revolutionary soldiers were laid to rest; beyond this as we ascend the hill, we see an ancient mortar partly embedded in a mound, which marks the site of the sod fort of 1776. From this fortification the American line of entrenchments thrown up just before the Battle of White Plains stretched away on the left to Horton's Pond, now Silver Lake, and to the right, west across Dusenbury Hill to the Bronx River and Chatterton Hill.

Soon our road leads down hill and across a brook, where we come to a parting of the ways distinguished for so many years by the great white oak tree named as a landmark in the early Indian deeds and in the original survey of the boundaries of White Plains for the Royal Patent of 1721. This tree so familiar to many was broken off not long ago and now only a few feet of the trunk remains of this once mighty king of the forest. However, even in its decline it is still a landmark, for it bears a sign which directs us to Washington's Headquarters. Taking the less traveled road at the left of the oak tree, we come in a few minutes to the old Elijah Miller House, the Headquarters of Washington while at White Plains.

Bolton's description of the dwelling and its situation written many years ago may apply quite well today, for the immediate surroundings are but little changed. He says: "The headquarters of Washington while stationed here were at a small farm house to the north of the village, situated amid a deep solitude of woods surrounded by hills and wild romantic scenery."

The house is indeed nearly hidden by the hills and one is at the gate before it is seen. Let us not pass

carelessly by, however, for the quaint artistic sign-board, designed and presented by Mr. Alexander McMillan Welch, hanging above the gate informs us that we have reached our destination—that this is the entrance to Washington's Headquarters.

This historic house and the land about it had passed through many changes in ownership during the past fifty years and was gradually becoming delapidated and had a sadly neglected appearance. While visitors interested in our country's historic places, occasionally stopped to look on this one time home of our great General and inscribe their names in the visitors' book, no decisive movement was taken toward the preservation of the property prior to 1916.

It had for some time been the aim and desire of the White Plains Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, to have this long-neglected house that the Commander-in-Chief made famous, nay sacred, by his presence restored and set apart as a cherished landmark of Revolutionary days, but the undertaking seemed almost too great for a small band of women to accomplish. However, a great object to be attained calls forth a correspondingly great effort and so, realizing that if nothing be attempted nothing is won, the Chapter members set to work. The first step was the securing of a one year option on the property from the owner, Mr. Charles Kaiser in September, 1916. Then came the discussion of ways and means of raising funds for the purchase and plans for repairing and restoring the house. After careful consideration it was thought best to ask the Board of Supervisors to buy the property for the County of Westchester. It seemed more fitting that this county where so much Revolutionary history was enacted should own on behalf of its sons and daughters this house

and bit of land of such great interest to all, rather than an individual, a society or even a single town. Accordingly, the Chapter went before the Board of Supervisors with a petition, asking that body to make the purchase, that the Headquarters might be preserved for our time and for the generations to come.

The Chapter Regent, Mrs. J. T. Lockwood, in a few words explained to the Board the purpose of



BOARD OF MANAGERS

Left to right, standing—Stephen Holden, Charles Everett Moore, Henry R. Barrett.

Left to right, sitting—Mrs. Frank L. Park, Mrs. Jeremiah T. Lockwood, Chairman; Mrs. Frank V. Fowler, Mrs. Selleck E. Coles, D. A. R. Historian; Mrs. Edward M. West.

the petition, and urged its favorable consideration. The petition had the endorsement of the Bronx and New Rochelle Chapters, D. A. R., of Mount Vernon and New Rochelle respectively, of the McKeel Post, G. A. R., of Katonah, and other patriotic organizations, as well as the local press.

The Supervisors voted in favor of the purchase, but then came the question of establishing a precedent. As far as it is known, no county had ever before taken title to an historic site.

It was necessary therefore for the State Legislature to empower the Board to consummate the purchase. A proper bill was accordingly prepared and placed before the former body by Senator Slater. The bill passed both houses and became a special Act granting the county the right to acquire the property; it was signed by Governor Whitman on April twenty-third, 1917; July third the sale was completed and on August 6th a Board of Managers was appointed by the Board of Supervisors of Westchester County.

All this necessitated a great deal of detail work which was ably carried to a successful conclusion by the Regent of the White Plains Chapter with the assistance of her officers and members.

The Chapter having obtained permission to restore the Headquarters House, at once undertook to raise the necessary funds. Though the building was practically the same as when Washington made it his home, some minor changes had been made in the interior and there was much repairing and renovating to be done.

The money required was raised by private subscription and the work was carried forward with so much energy and efficiency that it was possible to open the house to the public on the One Hundred and Forty-first Anniversary of the Battle of White Plains. As the twenty-eighth of October fell on Sunday in 1917, the exercises commemorating the event were held on Saturday, the twenty-seventh. It was most fitting that the annual Battle Day Celebration should take place on this historic ground, and it was a very happy occasion for the

Chapter members, who were thus repaid for their long months of hard work.

The ceremonies began by the Regent in a short address turning over the restored house to the County of Westchester. The Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, the Honorable Charles D. Millard, accepted on behalf of the County. The chief speaker of the afternoon was the Rev. Cyrus Townsend Brady, D.D., who was followed by several other prominent men who made brief addresses. Among the guests of honor were Mrs. Charles S. Whitman, wife of the Governor of New York; Mr. Louis Annin Ames, President of the Empire State Society Sons of the American Revolution; Hon. Cornelius Pugsley, Hon. Ffarrington M. Thompson, Mayor of the City of White Plains; Hon. Charles D. Millard, Mr. Alexander McMillan Welch, Mr. John Leonard Merrill, and others. The Glee Club of the White Plains High School sang several patriotic songs, which closed the program.

Following the exercises Mrs. Whitman and the Regent received the guests in General Washington's Council Room. Of great interest to the visitors were the mahogany table and the chair used by Washington in this very room during his stay in the Miller House. These were kindly loaned for the occasion by Mrs. H. M. Oakley, a descendant of Elijah Miller. With the antique furniture, the original built-in cupboard and the blazing log fire in the old chimney place, the room presented much the same appearance as it must have done in the days of Seventy-six. Altogether, the celebration was a most delightful one; even the weather was favorable for holding the exercises out of doors, the day being unusually bright and warm for the time of year.



FORMAL OPENING OF THE HOUSE TO PUBLIC ON OCTOBER 27, 1917

Another historic gathering at Washington's Headquarters was on Saturday, May 11th, 1918, when the Liberty Pole and Flag given by the Empire State Society, S. A. R., was dedicated. Mr. Ames, the President, made the presentation speech and the Honorable George R. Werner, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, accepted for the County. As Mrs. Whitman raised the flag on the staff, a detachment of soldiers and sailors stood at attention and saluted at the breaking out of the colors, while the bugle call rang out and all present joined in singing the Star Spangled Banner.

Two tablets on the front of the house were unveiled, one to George Washington presented by the White Plains Chapter, D. A. R., and one for the Headquarters, placed by the Board of Supervisors of Westchester County. Col. W. Lanier Washington, a great-great-great grandnephew of the Father of his Country and member of the Society of Cincinnati, gave an address on the history of the house; Miss Stella F. Broadhead, New York State Regent, D. A. R., spoke a few words of greeting, and the Honorable Elmer M. Wentworth, President General, S. A. R., made a stirring speech, which was followed by a brilliant oration by Supreme Court Justice, Honorable Arthur S. Tompkins.

Besides those just mentioned there were present the Vice-President General of the National Society, D. A. R., Mrs. Joseph Wood, Mrs. Simon Baruch, Regent of Knickerbocker Chapter, Regents of neighboring Chapters and many other distinguished guests.

II.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WHITE PLAINS, AND THE BATTLE.

After the defeat of the Americans on Long Island, August 27, 1776, Washington withdrew his troops by night, aided by fog and darkness, across to New York. The British soon followed, landing at Kip's Bay, under the protection of the guns of their frigates that had come up the East River and anchored near Ward's and Randall's Islands.

With the enemy in force on Manhattan it was now imperative for Washington to withdraw to the upper part of the Island. This he was able to do, and on the evening of September 15th the American Army was encamped on Harlem Heights. General Washington had his headquarters in the Roger Morris House, now often called the Jumel Mansion at 160th Street, near St. Nicholas Avenue.

The next day occurred the Battle of Harlem Plains, called by Sir Henry Clinton "this scrape," where the Americans were victorious; after this there was a pause in the hostilities, during which our troops were busy strengthening the works on Harlem (now Washington) Heights above the Hollow Way, and in completing Fort Washington, which was fated to fall into the hands of the British two months later.

At this time Washington held the lines of communication with the important New England States the main source of military supplies, and the whole of the Hudson River with the gates of the Highlands, which latter controlled the way to New Jersey and the South as well as the northern territory.

Pickets were posted to watch from the headlands, and Washington from his high position at the Morris House commanded views of the Sound, the Hudson and Harlem Rivers, a large part of Manhattan and a considerable area of southern Westchester County.

Howe realized this espionage, and to mask his real intentions sent a number of vessels, including a frigate, up the Hudson. These passed unharmed by the gunfire from Forts Washington and Constitution and broke through the American *chevaux-de-frise* which it was vainly hoped would effectually bar the passage of British shipping. These vessels after capturing and burning some small boats, anchored off Tarrytown. Washington immediately sent a detachment of about three hundred men to Tarrytown to watch the further movements of the enemy in this quarter and to prevent any attempt on their part to land troops from their vessels.

On October eleventh great activity was noted in the British lines, and early on the morning of the twelfth nearly a hundred large boats full of Hessians left Montrossor's (Randall's) Island and passed up to Throgg's Point where they landed. Familiar to many of us is the story of how General Knyphausen's troops were foiled in their attempt to march on up the neck toward the Village of Westchester by a small body of Americans under Col. Hand, who tore up the planks of a little wooden bridge over the causeway which connected the point with the main neck, the point being an island at high tide cut off from the mainland by a marshy inlet. The Hessians fell back, camped and threw up some earthworks.

On the thirteenth Howe's army arrived. Washington had not been idle during the previous month, but spent most of his days on horseback visiting

the outposts on the Sound and exploring the hills west of the Bronx between Kingsbridge and White Plains; he also rode to Croton, King's Ferry and Peekskill, and even crossed the Hudson to visit the posts of General Greene at Fort Constitution (Lee) on the Jersey shore.

He caused a series of entrenched camps to be placed along the west side of the Bronx to be occupied by the troops, if necessary, in case of attack.

The formation of the hills about White Plains and the important turnpikes leading through the town caused Washington early to realize the expediency of holding the army in position there.

At the time of the Revolution, though White Plains was but a small country village, it was of considerable importance, being the County Seat of Westchester County, and business center of the neighboring communities.

Voters met at the Court House to choose delegates to the Provincial Congress, and that body convened there after leaving New York City upon the entry of the British Army, from July ninth to twenty-ninth, 1776. It was on the third day of this session in White Plains that the Declaration of Independence was formally read from the steps of the building by Judge John Thomas.

White Plains in the heart of the county commanded the two principal routes to New England, the one over the old "Westchester Path" and along the Sound shore to Boston and the other via the turnpike from New York to Bennington, Vermont, through Danbury and Dover.

Howe at the head of his troops victorious at the Battle of Long Island having gained possession of Manhattan, now planned to outflank Washington's little army encamped about Kingsbridge, and, by gaining control of Westchester County, cut the

Americans off from the prosperous New England Colonies, at that time the main source of military supplies.

The ever alert General Washington foresaw this design and determined to frustrate it, if possible. If he could get his troops in good order up to the rugged hills above White Plains, his position would be well nigh impregnable, even though Howe should attack with his superior forces.

As early as the latter part of August a quantity of military stores and provisions had been sent up to White Plains for safety, and later more from Harlem Heights, and were guarded by a body of three hundred militia men.

While the Americans held their strong positions on Harlem Heights with General Heath's Division at Kingsbridge, they were busy establishing fortified positions and entrenched camps, but Washington saw full well that if Howe should land his troops from either the Hudson River or Long Island Sound, and gain a position to the north of the American forces the latter would be completely cut off from supplies and help. Washington accordingly gave orders for putting in better order the roads over which he expected to move his troops and supplies, and also caused obstructions such as felled trees and dug pits to be placed in the supposed way of the British advance. He discussed plans with his staff for moving his army northward to outwit this obvious flank movement of the enemy and to protect the important points above the Sound.

Work in the camp went forward and supplies were sent on as fast as possible, but there was woful lack of means of transportation—in many cases the soldiers had to draw the baggage and guns by hand. Scanty as the supplies were some had to be left behind for this reason, as we learn from Lieut.-Col.

Tilghman's letter of the twenty-first to William Duer. He writes, urging the immediate forwarding of food-stuffs and says they were obliged to leave eighty or ninety barrels of flour at Kingsbridge because of lack of means to transport them. Washington also wrote to the Commissary General entreating once more that the much needed supplies be forwarded at once, especially beef and flour.

As General Howe moved his troops up from New York, leaving a strong force to occupy the city, Washington crossed from Harlem to Kingsbridge. The Hessian troops had landed on Throgg's Point on the twelfth and remained encamped there for several days. Howe's own troops landed there and later on Pell's Point.

Washington was constantly on the watch for some unexpected movement of the enemy and was taking every precaution to guard against a surprise. He sent out advance parties to hold the vantage points along the west side of the Bronx River, and on the twenty-second moved up to the Valentine House (now destroyed) near Yonkers where the present St. Joseph's Seminary now stands. He made a tour of inspection extending as far north as White Plains on the twenty-first and dated several letters and orders from there.

As General Lord Howe proceeded slowly toward Upper New Rochelle, Washington's army advanced in a parallel line, keeping always on the west side of the Bronx. The vital question was: Who should reach White Plains first?

No doubt the Patriot Army despite the lack of equipment and supplies was inspired and encouraged by its General's stirring address to the troops the week before, for they pressed on while Howe's army camped at New Rochelle. On the twenty-second the Commander-in-Chief returned to White

Plains and established his headquarters at the Miller House. The previous night Colonel Haslet was sent with a detachment to attack the Queen's Rangers at Mamaroneck. The surprise was not as successful as it was hoped, owing to a blunder of the guides, but Haslet's men killed and wounded a number and brought thirty-six prisoners to White Plains, together with "a pair of colors, sixty stand of arms and a good many blankets." General Sterling expressed himself as highly pleased with the expedition, and "thanked Col. Haslet and his command publicly on parade."

On the afternoon of Thursday, the twenty-fourth, Howe's army began to move from the camp at New Rochelle to Scarsdale and on the twenty-fifth the main body of the Royal Army had come up. Howe's left column was on a line with the Bronx, where across the little river General Lee was toiling with his column heavily laden with baggage and stores, pressing on to join the main American Army at White Plains. As the two columns were only about a mile apart and at times were visible to each other, Lee was aware of the danger of his being cut off by the enemy and so made a detour to the westward and came up by the Dobbs Ferry Road. By marching all night he reached White Plains at ten the next morning.

After the necessary preparations were made, Howe early on the morning of Monday, the twenty-eighth, broke camp and in two columns advanced to White Plains. The left advance column was mainly Hessian troops, who attacked a party of Americans under Major-General Spencer at Hart's Corners. He was sent out by General Washington to retard the advance of the enemy, but was forced to retreat. The oncoming Hessians seeing that Chatterton Hill was occupied by American soldiers

directed their attack toward that point, where some entrenchments had been hastily thrown up.

The main body of the British continued to advance toward White Plains, the right flank reaching to the old Mamaroneck Road and the left to the Bronx River. It seemed as if Howe were contemplating a general attack on the American front.

As it was against the military ideas of that time to allow the flank or rear of an army to be jeopardized in the slightest degree without all possible and immediate attempt to remove the opposing troops, it is probable that Howe postponed his general attack until the enemy on Chatterton Hill should be disposed of, especially as his right wing extended only to about opposite the American center.

The troops on Chatterton Hill in a sharply contested engagement several times repulsed the attacks of the enemy, but were finally driven from their position and forced to retreat. They rejoined the main army, and the Hessian troops remained in possession of the hill, making no attempt to pursue the retreating Americans. Instead, they formed and dressed their lines and prepared their dinner. They tore down a barn belonging to Jacob Hunt on the west side of the hill to feed their campfires.

After the battle on the twenty-eighth, General Howe seems to have become faint-hearted; he spent two days entrenching his camp and waiting for reinforcements. This delay gave Washington time to move his troops back to the rugged hills of North Castle and to further entrench himself. On the night of October thirty-first during a heavy rainstorm his army swung north and on the morning of November first Howe gave orders for the occupation of the abandoned lines of the Americans.

On account of the severe rain the project was

given up; however, on the same day a heavy body from the British right moved against the Americans' extreme left which consisted of General Heath's division. After some firing on both sides nothing decisive occurred, and the downpour of rain continuing, the British gave up the attack. Heath's division was at this time stationed on the steep ridge north of Lake Street and cannon balls have been found in the vicinity.

General Washington meanwhile had taken a position whence he could defy attack, and thoroughly secured his lines of communication with the North and East. Howe made no further attempt to follow up the advantage gained on the twenty-eighth other than the skirmish of November first just mentioned, and on November fourth and fifth he broke camp and marched to Dobbs Ferry where he encamped on the sixth.

General Howe's unexpected withdrawal from White Plains has been a topic of much speculation, but some tidings he had received from Earl Percy, the British Commander in New York City, a day or two before probably influenced the sudden movement. Colonel Magaw was at that time in command of Fort Washington, and on November second his Adjutant, William De Mont, left the fort and conveyed to Earl Percy plans of the fortifications and full information as to the garrison and stores. The news was immediately forwarded to Howe at White Plains and he at once prepared to countermarch and on the sixteenth attacked and took Fort Washington. The garrison being completely surrounded by greatly superior numbers was compelled to surrender; twenty-eight hundred men were taken prisoners, together with forty-three guns and a large quantity of supplies. This loss was a severe blow to Washington.

During the early days of the month he was actively engaged in visiting all parts of his army and planning for their best disposition. On Wednesday, November sixth, he wrote from his Headquarters at the Miller House to the President of Congress: "Yesterday morning the enemy made a sudden and unexpected movement from the several points they had taken in our front. They broke up their whole encampment the preceding night and have advanced toward Kingsbridge and the North River. In consequence of this movement I called a council of general officers today to consult on such measures as should be adopted in case they pursued their retreat to New York."

The General also said: "I am happy to inform you that in the engagement of Monday sen'night I have reason to believe our loss was by no means so considerable as was conjectured at first."

Washington's army at this time totaled about twenty-five thousand men, but at the time of the Battle of White Plains not many more than one-half the number were available for active duty. Many were ill, some on furloughs and others detached for duty at other posts. Colonel Harrison, the General's secretary at White Plains, writes on November third: "We have just received word from General Parsons who is still stationed with his brigade at Saw Pits (Port Chester) that a large body of the enemy have advanced within a mile of him. He is on his march to meet 'em and requests some troops to be sent to maintain the lines he has thrown up."

During the occupation of White Plains the terms of enlistment of many of the Connecticut troops expired. On November third General Washington ordered the discharge of the Light Horse under Major Backus of whom he spoke in high praise—

"Their conduct has been extremely good and the services they have rendered of great advantage to their country."

From Headquarters he wrote to General Lee: "Before White Plains . . . The late movement of the enemy and the probability of their having designs upon the Jerseys (confirmed by sundry accounts from deserters and prisoners) rendering it necessary to throw a body of troops over the North River, I shall immediately follow and the command of the army which remains (after Gen. Heath's Division marches to Peekskill) will devolve upon you."

Washington left the Miller House on the tenth and the next day wrote from Peekskill to the President of Congress: "I left White Plains about eleven o'clock yesterday. All peace there. The enemy appeared to be preparing for their expedition to Jersey according to every information. What their designs are, or whether their present conduct is not a feint, I cannot determine. The Maryland and Virginia troops under Lord Sterling have crossed the river as have part of those from the Jerseys; the remainder are now embarking. The troops judged necessary to secure the Highlands have also got up. I am going to examine the passes and direct such works as may appear necessary; after which, and making the best disposition I can of things in this quarter, I intend to proceed to Jersey, which I expect to do tomorrow."

About one thousand feet of entrenchments can still be traced on Hatfield Hill to the northeast of White Plains, by which it will be seen that the Headquarters were very close to the lines of the army. Washington was constantly on horseback, exploring, inspecting and planning, and inspiring his troops by his presence.



DRUM CARRIED AT BATTLE OF WHITE PLAINS – CANNON BALL AND BAYONET
FOUND ON BATTLEFIELD OF WHITE PLAINS, 1776 –
U. S. ARMY BUTTONS, 1778

It was not until November fifth, the evening after the British troops had marched to Dobbs Ferry, that a party of American soldiers under Major Austin set fire to the Court House, the Presbyterian Church and several residences. This wanton act was severely condemned by the Commander-in-Chief and Major Austin was court martialed and dismissed from the service. The day after the building was burned, Washington expressed himself at Headquarters as follows: "It is with the utmost astonishment and abhorrence the General is informed that some base and cowardly wretches, last night set fire to the Court House and other buildings which the enemy left. The army may rely upon it that they shall be brought to justice and meet the punishment they deserve."

The army began to move northward on November ninth and General Washington followed as has been said on the tenth. Lee remained at White Plains until the first of December, notwithstanding Washington's orders to reinforce him in New Jersey.

After the Battle of Monmouth on June 28, 1778, the British retreated toward Sandy Hook, while Washington led his army north through the Jerseys and crossed the Hudson at King's Ferry connecting Stony Point with Verplanck's Point between Croton and Peekskill in Westchester County. The design of this move was similar to the one of 1776, namely, to prevent the enemy from penetrating the country above New York City and gaining control of the gateway to New England and the north.

On Monday, July 20th, 1778, the main body of the American Army was again at White Plains, and Washington on the 25th was at his old Headquarters.

He chose this situation as he had done two years

earlier because it controlled the roads to the Eastern States on the one hand and on the other, the Highlands and upper country, and because in case of defeat he could retire to the steep and rocky hills of North Castle and lead the army east or west as the occasion might require. As one looks today at those rugged heights the wisdom of choosing this strategic position is easily realized. On August twentieth Washington wrote to General Nelson: "It is not a little pleasing nor less wonderful to contemplate, that after two years of manoeuvring and undergoing the strangest vicissitudes that perhaps ever attended any one contest since the creation, both armies are brought back to the very point they set out from, and that which was the offending party in the beginning is now reduced to the use of spade and pickaxe for defense. The hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all this that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more than wicked that has not gratitude to acknowledge his obligations."

Washington wrote to Gouveneur Morris on July twenty-fourth saying: "It is neither the expense or trouble of them (the foreign officers) that I dread; there is an evil more extreme in its nature and fatal in its consequences to be apprehended, and that is the drawing of all our officers out of the service and throwing not only our army but our military councils entirely into the hands of foreigners."

Some weeks later he wrote to General Sullivan: "I intend to place the whole army in such a position in a day or two that they may either march to the Eastward, or be within supporting distance of the posts upon the North River as appearances may require."

Washington remained in White Plains until the sixteenth of September, when he moved the camp

to Fredericksburg, then a precinct of Dutchess County, where he had his headquarters in the present town of Patterson. Governor Clinton and General Gates were also in White Plains during the summer of 1778.

A quotation from a letter to the Board of War, dated August third, says: "Our strength on the present ground is less than 13,000," but General Heath about this time writes from Boston that the army at White Plains was said to number 20,000 men, which was probably the largest assemblage of troops during the war.

The following items from General Washington's expense account with the United States gives an idea of the cost of war quite different from the vast sums necessary to carry on the fighting in these days.

"Aug. 1778.

"To sundry expenditures on the March
of the Army from Valley Forge June
18th (by way of Monmouth) till its
arrival at the White Plains the latter
end of July..... \$3,240

"Sept. 1778.

"To cash paid in Reconnoitering the
County abv the Plains betw'n the
No. and East Rivers..... 133.00"

In the summer of 1781 Washington was again at White Plains. When the French troops hastened down from Newport, Rhode Island via Newtown, Bedford and White Plains to Eastchester to form a junction with the American forces near Kingsbridge, the plan was to cut off the light corps of British and Loyalists that had been harassing the Patriots.

The French troops reached Bedford on July second and the Legion of the Duc de Lauzun made a

forced march in advance of the others and reached Eastchester very early on the morning of the third. Washington had hurried down from Peekskill and joined the advance detachment of the French, but the well-planned expedition against Kingsbridge and New York was not successful.

That evening Washington wrote from Valentine's Hill, Yonkers, to Comte de Rochambeau, who had reached North Castle or White Plains: "The operations of the day are over and I am sorry to say that I have not had the happiness to succeed to my wishes, although I think very essential benefit will result to our future operations from the opportunity I have had in a very full measure to reconnoiter the position and works of the enemy on the north end of York Island.

"The American Army and the Legion of the Duc de Lauzun will march tomorrow to White Plains.

"If it will be convenient to you, I shall be happy to receive your Excellency with your troops at that place the day after tomorrow."

On the fourth of July he left Valentine's Hill and took up a position a little to the left of Dobbs Ferry and, as he says in his journal, "marked a camp for the French Army upon our left. Duc de Lauzun marched to White Plains and Gen. Waterbury to Horseneck" (Greenwich).

By this time the main body of the French troops under Rochambeau had come down from Bedford to North Castle, and it is probable they encamped temporarily on the old ground of the American camp of the year before; and perhaps Comte de Rochambeau had his quarters in the Miller House always so ready to open its doors to those fighting for the Patriots' cause. The Comte wrote to General Washington on the fourth saying: "I arrived here with the first brigade yesterday at nine o'clock in

the morning. The second brigade by a forced march joined me in the afternoon, and we are now here all together ready to execute your orders. I wait with the greatest impatience to hear from you and the Duc de Lauzun." The Duc had advanced to White Plains and had his Headquarters in the Falconer House on Broadway, where he remained for about six weeks. This was the home of Captain John Falconer of the American Army, and was the scene of many activities, numbers of notable French and American officers having been entertained there. The house remained standing until 1882 when it was demolished.

General Washington's visit on the fifth of July was an occasion of considerable ceremony. He had sent word in advance of his coming, as is shown in his letter of July third, quoted above, and the gallant French officers mounted their horses and rode forward to meet him as he approached White Plains. He visited the French camp, dined with Rochambeau and his staff and in the evening upon his return journey was again accompanied by an escort of French officers for several miles, when they took leave of him.

Washington's Headquarters were then at the Joseph Appleby House on the Dobbs Ferry Road about three and one-half miles from the Hudson. The house, which was destroyed some years ago, stood on a small elevation called Washington's Hill.

The day following, July sixth, Rochambeau broke camp and marched to join the main body of the Americans at Phillipsburgh twelve miles from Kingsbridge. The Comte went into Headquarters at the Odell House still to be seen in the present Town of Greenburgh about one and one-half miles west of Central Avenue on the south branch of the road leading over the hill from Hart's Corners.



CHAIR USED BY GENERAL WASHINGTON DURING
HIS STAY IN THE MILLER HOUSE

The French lines extended from the American right east to Chatterton Hill, their left being supported by the Duc de Lauzun at White Plains.

General Greene was also at White Plains from July twenty-first to the twenty-eighth, when he departed for Providence. He speaks of Lafayette's troops being at White Plains at this time.

The allied armies held the position in Greenburgh and White Plains until the twenty-sixth of August, when the great movement was started that was to result in the capitulation of Cornwallis at Yorktown less than two months later.

Washington's expense account has this entry on August 28, 1781:

"To expenditures on my March from ye White Plains or Dobbs Ferry by way of King's Ferry to Brunswick inclusive—38£ 15s 0d."

On September twenty-seventh of the following year we find that "Gen. Washington with an escort of dragoons and light infantry reconnoitered the grounds on the east side of the (Hudson) River below the White Plains, and on the twenty-ninth returned to camp (at Verplanck's Point). They went down as far as Philipsburgh, thence across to the Sound."

Thus it will be seen that the great Commander-in-Chief was in White Plains at least three and probably five or more times during the Revolution, and that many other famous generals with their divisions were stationed here from time to time.

III.

THE MILLER FAMILY.

THE Miller family record states that "Ensign John Miller emigrated from Holland to the British Colonies of North America about the year 1680. He located in the County of Westchester and possessed all the land from the north line of the Rural Cemetery bounded on the west by the Bronx River, northeasterly by the Bronx and the land of William Davis; about two miles in length by a half mile in breadth, containing about six hundred acres."

However, upon careful research of town, county and church records, this does not seem to be altogether correct, and the line of John Miller, who settled in Bedford, has probably been confused with the Millers of Rye and later of North Castle.

- According to Baird's History of Rye, and the family historian, Robert B. Miller, the ancestor of the Millers of North Castle and White Plains was James who came from Norwalk, Conn., to Rye which was then a part of Fairfield County, Connecticut. He and his wife Martha were recorded December 26, 1681, as holding land on Budd's Neck, Rye, "near the Old Westchester Path." In 1701 the Rye records show that "the towne hath granted by a voat unto James Miller tenn eakers of land within the White Plains purches to be Layd out by those layers out which was chosen to lay out the White Plaines to the best of their descretion." He is mentioned as living in 1708. The sons of James were Abraham who settled in Saw Pit (now Portchester), Samuel of Rye, and Anthony of

White Plains, who had land lying on both sides of the White Plains-North Castle line, and perhaps John. It is evident from the records that part of the first Anthony's lands came to him from his father James, and part was later granted him by the town of Rye. Deeds show that Anthony, Sr's land ran from Cranberry Pond in North Castle down to Great Meadow Brook in White Plains and aggregated about six hundred acres, as tradition asserts. He built a fulling mill on the Great Meadow Brook near where it flows into the Bronx River, and the said mill and brook are designated in the Royal Patent of White Plains in 1721, the westerly line of the survey of the new town extending along the Bronx to "seventeen chains above Anthony Miller's fulling mill." The mill and southern portion of the estate descended to Anthony Miller, Jr., and his original house is believed to be the one still standing near the brook.

The sons of the first Anthony were James, Abraham, Elijah and Anthony, Jr.

It was Elijah, the third son, born May 8, 1728, who inherited the portion of land on which the homestead stood. He married Ann Fisher, the daughter of a neighbor; their seven children were Sarah, Martha, Zipporah, James, Elijah, John and Abraham. Elijah Miller was a Lieutenant in the French and Indian Wars and joined the Patriot Army early in the struggle for liberty. On October twenty-seventh, 1775, he was appointed by Nathaniel Woodhull, President of the Provincial Congress of New York, Adjutant of a regiment of Westchester County Militia under Col. Samuel Drake.

He was wounded at Hurlgate a few weeks after the Declaration of Independence had been read from the old Court House, and was brought to his home where he passed away on the twenty-first of

August, 1776. It has been said that he died at Hurlgate, but as means of transportation were often unavailable, soldiers were generally buried where they died, and as Adjutant Miller was buried in the Presbyterian Churchyard in White Plains, it is more probable that he died in his own home. Two of his sons also served in the Revolution. These were John and Elijah, Jr., who both died on December 22nd, 1776, of disease contracted in camp.

Ann Miller lived a long life of usefulness and saw her grandchildren and great grandchildren growing up around her. She died at the advanced age of ninety-two, full of faith and good works. It was one of her last requests that four of her grandsons who were named Elijah after her departed husband, should carry her to the grave. Five children survived her, two sons, Elijah and John, having died before their mother.

Elijah willed his property to be sold and £200 to go to his wife Ann as her third of the estate, the remainder to be divided among his sons and daughters, the boys to have double portions. The property did not go out of the family, however, and the homestead was left to James, son of Elijah and Ann, by the will of his mother who died in 1819. James died in 1839 and devised his property to his wife, Rachel, and two sons, Isaac and John, and daughters, Mary, Sally and Ann. Isaac conveyed his interest to John and Ann and Mary, wife of Archibald Martine. A map of the farm made in 1839 shows that it then contained one hundred acres. Mary and Archibald Martine conveyed to John and Ann Miller in 1855. John died in 1862, leaving his one-half interest to his two sisters, Ann and Mary, and to two brothers, Isaac and Robert, and his niece, Henrietta Oakley. In 1863 these five people conveyed to Samuel Roe, who in 1869 con-



DINING ROOM

veyed to Elizabeth L. Roe, and she in turn sold to George W. Sutton in 1885. After Mr. Sutton's death in 1894, his executors sold to Arthur L. Collins in 1903. Collins the next year conveyed to the New Netherland Realty Company, who mapped the land and subdivided it. The Company sold the portion containing the Miller homestead to Julia Kaiser in 1905 and on July 3, 1917, Mrs. Kaiser conveyed the house with about an acre and a quarter of ground to the County of Westchester.

When Washington came to White Plains in 1776, the recently bereaved widow, Ann Miller, proved herself a worthy soldier's wife. She opened her house to the General and his staff and also took care of soldiers wounded in battle.

One poor fellow, we are told, had his tongue shot out and she fed him carefully with her own hands, but notwithstanding her care, he died.

One pauses to wonder how so many people beside her own large family could have been accommodated in Mrs. Miller's small farm house. Personal inconvenience is not to be considered in war time and any patriotic family of those days might have been glad and proud to have the honor of sharing their home temporarily with the Commander-in-Chief.

The Methodist Magazine of December, 1819, speaking of the Miller place in 1776, says "the land was covered with tents." This partially explains the situation. The aides and members of Washington's military family often slept in tents pitched near the house which the General occupied. This we know was the arrangement at the Stone House at Bound Brook and at Morristown and other places; and doubtless in the autumn of 1776 the sheltered valley was full of camps as well as the surrounding hillsides.

It has been said by some writers that when Washington came up from Valentine's Hill, he spent his first night in White Plains at a house in the village and went on to the Miller House on the twenty-fourth. Baker says: "He (Washington) established himself at White Plains on the twenty-third;" so it seems more than probable that he went directly to his chosen headquarters.

Another interesting fact about the Miller House is that it may be called the Home of Methodist

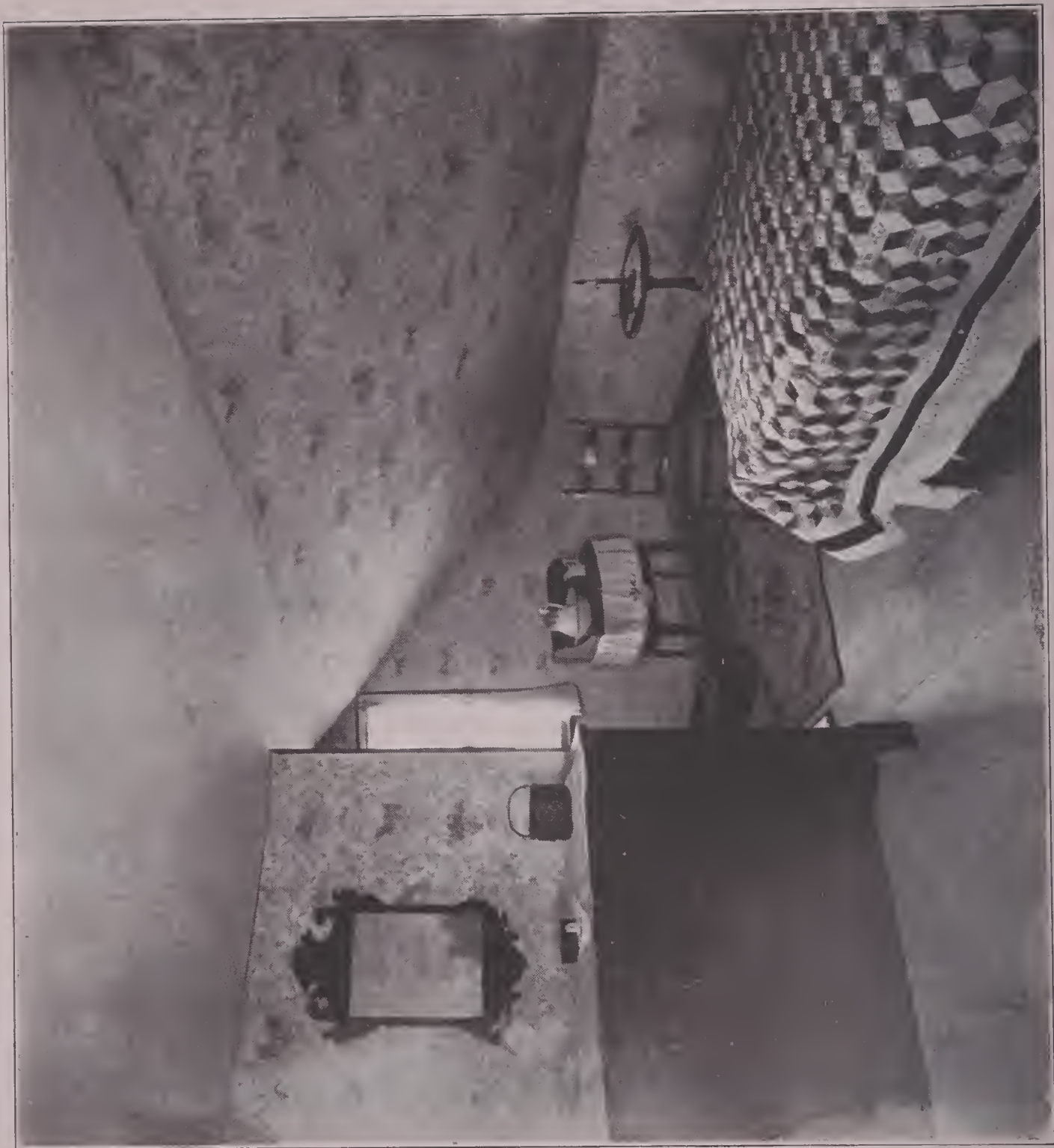


TABLE USED BY GENERAL WASHINGTON DURING
HIS STAY IN THE MILLER HOUSE

Organization in White Plains. During the Revolution no regular services were held here, but very soon after the war, little companies gathered from time to time in private houses to worship. The principal one met at the home of Mrs. Ann Miller.

When the New Rochelle Circuit was organized in 1787, Mrs. Miller's was one of the regular ap-

pointments on the circuit; the preacher was the Rev. Samuel Talbot and he began with six members. Hither came Francis Asbury to preach to the little band of faithful ones. In 1792 or thereabout six new members were added, three of whom, Abraham Miller, Abraham Davis and John Hatfield, were men of influence and by their efforts the society grew strong. The First Methodist Church was incorporated in 1795, and the first church building was erected at the corner of Broadway and the old Tarrytown Road, and the old churchyard forms part of the present Rural Cemetery.



SECOND FLOOR BEDROOM RESTORED AND REFURNISHED BY MRS. J. T.

LOCKWOOD

IV.

THE HOUSE AND ITS CONTENTS.

THE exact date of the building of the Miller House cannot be ascertained. When James Miller or his son settled on the land about the year 1680,* it is probable that his first task was to make a clearing in the woods and to build a log cabin of the trees he must needs cut down.

Part of the present structure, the east end, was built about 1738. Its style resembles that of the Rhode Island farmhouses of the period. It nestles close to the hill which rises abruptly at the east end. The house faces south with a porch across the front, and the entrance door opens directly into a large room, probably the family living room, and back of this is another good-sized room, the dining room and kitchen of ancient times. Here is the old stone fire-place with pot hooks and narrow mantel shelf. Stairs ascend at the west side to an open attic.

Opening from the kitchen on the east was the buttery with its floor and walls of native stone often diligently white washed by the successive housewives of the family, and here were the broad shelves which held the crocks of milk and trays of golden butter. At the right of the living room were two small bedrooms.

About 1770 the addition was built on the west end of the house, giving it its present style and appear-

*NOTE—It would seem, from the town records, that James did not leave his home in Rye to live upon his lands to the north, but that his son Anthony was the first of the family to settle near the upper boundary of White Plains, probably not long after the grant of 1701, the latter's fulling mill being an established landmark in 1721.



WASHINGTON'S ROOM, SHOWING CHAIR HE USED DURING HIS OCCUPANCY

ance. The rafters in the attic show where the new part was joined to the earlier structure and the wood has a different shade. At Mr. Welch's suggestion a small section was cut from the west end of the original house, now the east wall of the new rooms of 1770, which shows the ancient hand-made shingles that covered what was once the outside of the house. The section of boards removed from the wall was made into a small door and replaced, so that visitors may open it and look at these shingles.

A small piece of wall was also cut from over the doorway leading from the entrance or living room into the new west room, and a glass placed over the opening, thus showing the old mud mortar. The later part consists of two rooms downstairs and two finished and plastered rooms in the second story.

The broad planks of the floors, the hand-hewn beams and rafters, the wrought iron hinges and old-fashioned locks all give silent evidence of the antiquity of the house. The Dutch style half-door at the front entrance has been restored.

The two downstairs rooms in the newer part of the house were the ones occupied by General Washington during his stay with the Millers. The large front one was his sitting room where he held his staff councils, and the one next was probably his bedroom. The rear room had a door opening on a north porch which was a convenient arrangement, permitting ingress and egress of the aides and others without interfering with the hostess and her family. A chimney is built at the west end in a way that permits of a fireplace in each of the apartments. Up through the throat of the old chimney, what generous fires must have roared a cheerful welcome to the tired soldier on the chilly autumn nights when he returned to headquarters after a hard day in the saddle reconnoitering, inspecting and inspiring his



LIVING ROOM

troops with his own dauntless courage and fortitude!

A writer in a New York newspaper of 1845 thus describes a visit to the house when it was still occupied by descendants of Elijah and Ann Miller: "When we entered the room of Mrs. Miller's farmhouse where that great and good man had resided and where he resolved to try the hazard of a battle with a flushed and victorious foe, we could not repress the enthusiasm which the place and the moment and the memory inspired. We looked around with eagerness at each portion of the room on which his eye must have rested; we gazed through the small windowpanes through which he must so often and so anxiously have looked toward the enemy; and at the old-fashioned buffets where his table-service was deposited for his accommodation. But little change has taken place in the building, and its amiable and patriotic inmates have shown their respect for the hero by placing on the walls his portrait and several representations of his last days at Mt. Vernon."

By the buffet above mentioned is probably meant the cupboard with glass doors built into the corner of the Council room. The glasses in the doors of this cupboard were cracked by the concussion of the cannon firing during one of the engagements in the vicinity and were left unrepaired as a memento of the time. A later owner moved by a spirit of renovation caused the broken panes to be removed and new glass to be placed in the cupboard doors; she was much chagrined to learn afterwards how the old panes had been shattered and why they had been left in that state.

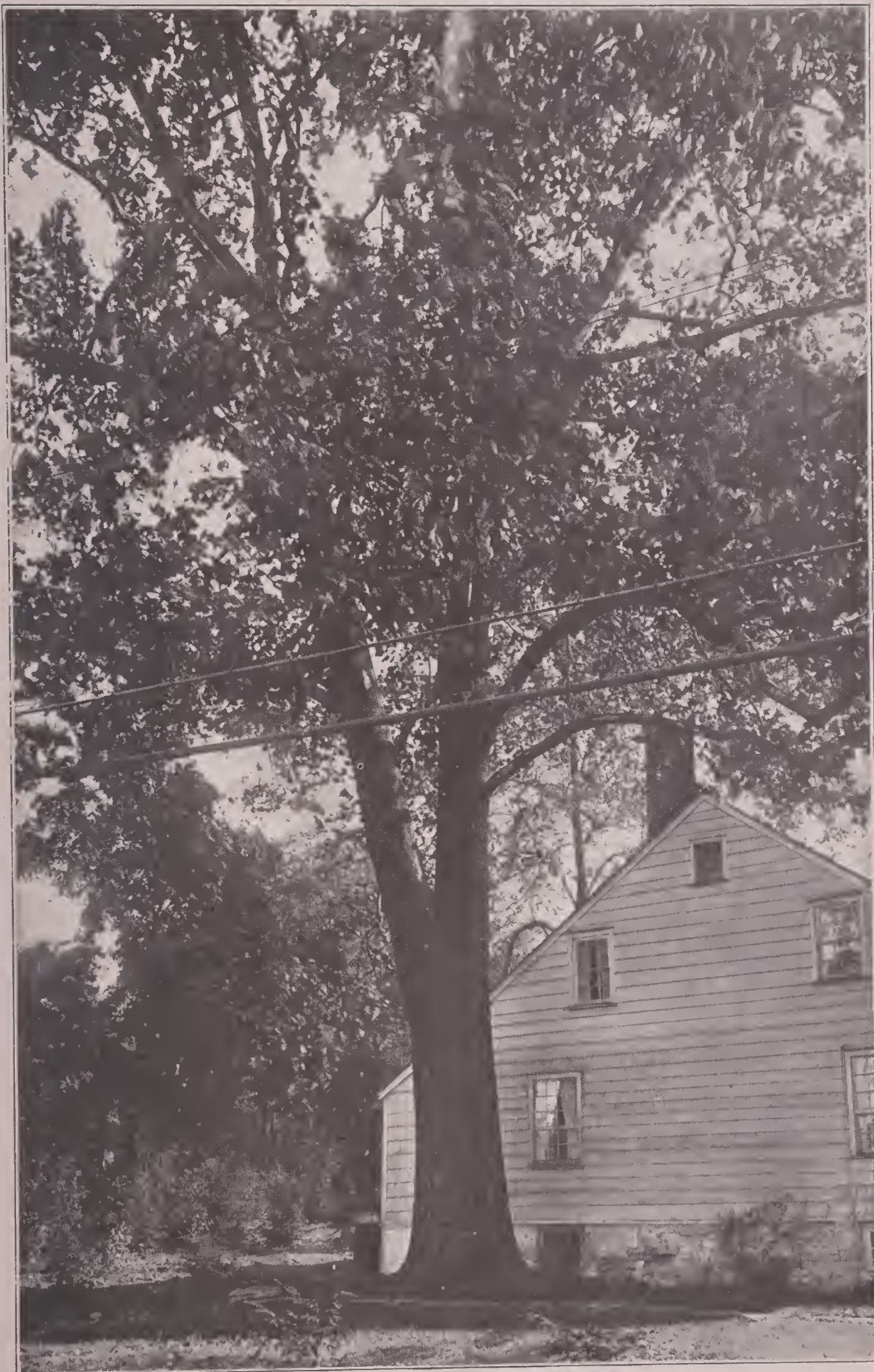
Other relics still preserved by members of the Miller family are an Indian knife, dug up on the farm in 1705, various arrow heads and stone hatch-

ets, grim souvenirs of Wampus and his tribes; also buttons from soldiers' uniforms found over a hundred years ago and sundry bullets and cannon balls; but above all these, the objects of the greatest care and veneration are the mahogany drop-leaf table used by the great General and the chair on which he was wont to sit when in the Miller House. The chair has a rush seat and a high fiddle back. These are now the property of Mrs. Henrietta Oakley of White Plains.

As people often came to see Washington's Headquarters the Millers kept a visitors' book for many years, and this register contains a long list of those who journeyed to the historic house and wrote their names therein. Upon the opening of the building to the public on October twenty-seventh, 1917, a new book was opened by Mrs. Charles Whitman, wife of the Governor of New York State, she being the first to inscribe her name and other guests followed her example. The pen used on this occasion was the one with which the Governor signed the bill authorizing the County to buy the Headquarters, and is now framed and hangs on the wall in the entrance room.

Near the east or rear end of the house an interesting earth cellar is built into the steep side of the hill. The arched roof is supported by immense slabs of stone. This cellar is really a good-sized storage room and was built to contain the family supplies, to keep them cool in the summer and from freezing in the winter. Here it is said that ammunition was stored by Washington's orders during the time the army was encamped in the neighborhood.

Probably the oldest object of interest on the grounds is the magnificent sycamore tree that stands near the northwest corner of the house and towers



WEST VIEW OF HEADQUARTERS, SHOWING
ANCIENT SYCAMORE TREE

far above it.* There it stood in its sturdy youth in view of our beloved General as he looked from the windows of his temporary home, and today it stands as a guard of honor before the ancient dwelling dedicated to his memory. Brave and strong and mighty this beautiful old tree stretches forth its far spreading branches as if to protect the famous house below. They have grown old together—the little white house and the veteran tree, but we hope and trust they may long be preserved to gladden the eyes of all beholders, and to link us to the past by the glorious memories they recall.

*NOTE—This tree received the second prize given by New York State for historic trees, and is recorded in the Hall of Fame for Trees in Washington, D. C.

V.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

WITHOUT the co-operation of the Board of Supervisors of Westchester County, it would not have been possible at this time to have purchased the historic Headquarters House from the private owner and to have opened it to the public which is indebted to the Board for the privilege of visiting the house and examining the interesting relics of by-gone days on exhibition therein.

Especially, are thanks due to Mr. Robert P. Smith, one of the White Plains Supervisors, who placed the petition of the White Plains Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, before the Board and aided in various ways the passage of a favorable resolution by that body; and to Senator George A. Slater, who presented to the State Legislature the bill empowering the county to buy the property; and to Governor Whitman for signing the bill and making it an Act.

Great credit is due the Regent, Mrs. J. T. Lockwood, and the officers and members of the Chapter who started the movement by securing an option on the property and who worked indefatigably to further the consummation of the project and restore the house and grounds.

We are deeply grateful to Mr. Alexander McMillan Welch for his great help in the work of restoration. His kindly interest and expert advice were of inestimable service; and to him also thanks are due for the appropriate sign at the gate and for specimens of Colonial hardware used in the house.

Mr. Thomas F. Foley also ably assisted in the work of renovating the building.

The Empire State Society, Sons of the American Revolution, has generously presented a Liberty-pole and beautiful flag to the Headquarters. Colonel W. Lanier Washington, a great-great-great-grand-nephew of General Washington, has given a portrait of Mary Ball Washington, General Washington's mother, which is greatly prized.

Thanks to the hearty interest of various friends, many Revolutionary and other relics and antique furniture have been presented or loaned to the house. Among these friends are Miss Anna Sherwood, a descendant of the original owner, who has kindly given a homespun woolen blanket that once belonged to Mrs. Ann Miller, the hostess of General Washington; Mrs. H. M. Oakley, the donor of a Windsor armchair used in the house at the time of the great man's occupancy; Mrs. Frank L. Park and other descendants of Elijah and Ann Miller for restoring the front entrance door. Another armchair used by Washington in this house was donated by Mr. R. Guy McLean, and one loaned by Mr. C. F. Halsted of Brooklyn.

Mrs. Mary Baldwin, a granddaughter of Isaac Webber, a patriot of Revolutionary times, has given to the Headquarters a mirror brought from Holland over two hundred years ago by the first members of the Webber family who came to this country. During the Revolution, it belonged to Isaac Webber, who lived near North Castle. When his home was looted by the British, this glass, with other treasures, was safely hidden between the board partitions. After the War it was taken from its hiding place and has remained in the family ever since until Mrs. Baldwin presented it to the Headquarters collection.

Thanks are also due to Mrs. Charles Osgood and

her sister Miss Elizabeth Marley for repairing the corner cupboard; to Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Lockwood, who have loaned and given furniture, pictures, books and many smaller objects of great interest; especially to Mrs. Lockwood, who, beside all her other work for the Headquarters, has collected newspaper articles, prints, photographs and matter relating to the house and work from the time the Chapter secured the option of the purchase to the present date, and has placed all these in an attractive scrap-book and presented it to the Headquarters, and has also completely furnished a bedroom on the second floor; to Mrs. Lucien Antoine, who has loaned many pieces of antique furniture; and to the numerous other persons who have given of their treasures, thus adding so greatly to the interest of the house as a museum.

Miss Irene Gedney Horton has kindly numbered and catalogued by the card index system all articles donated or loaned, thus insuring the identification of the smallest as well as the largest object.

ELIZABETH G. H. COLES,

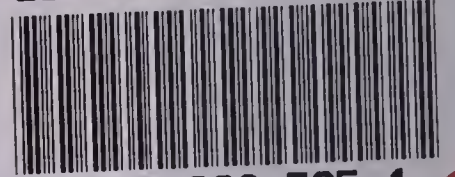
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